

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 07707 01 OF 02 211431Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-05 SAJ-01

/086 W

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R 211413Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1328

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 07707

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB/QCZCLDNRIO.#

SUBJECT: BOYD, LEADING MODERATE, WINS ELECTION FOR  
ENGINEERING UNION'S SECOND POST

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. JOHN BOYD, 57, A LEADER OF RIGHT-  
WING FORCES IN BRITAIN'S SECOND LARGEST UNION, THE  
AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEERING WORKERS (AUEW), WAS  
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PAGE 02 LONDON 07707 01 OF 02 211431Z

OVERWHELMINGLY ELECTED, AFTER A POSTAL BALLOT, TO THE

UNION'S SECOND MOST IMPORTANT POST - GENERAL SECRETARY. HE DEFEATED THE CANDIDATE OF THE COMBINED LEFT - BOB WRIGHT - BY A VOTE OF 164,276 AGAINST 96,216. THE KEY POST IN THE UNION REMAINS, HOWEVER, IN THE HANDS OF ITS LEFT-WING PRESIDENT, HUGH SCANLON. MOREOVER, THE ELECTION OF THE MODERATES IS MARRED BY THE FACT THAT SCANLON, AFTER A TIE VOTE ON THE UNION'S EXECUTIVE, CAST A DECISIVE VOTE WHICH ELIMINATED THE POSTAL BALLOT--AN ELECTORAL DEVICE WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE BOYD VICTORY AND WHICH THE MODERATES HAD BEEN COUNTING ON TO ASSIST THEIR CAUSE IN FUTURE UNION ELECTIONS. THE AUEW DECISION TO ELIMINATE THE POSTAL BALLOT IS BEING APPEALED AND THERE ARE ALSO MOVES IN THE PARLIAMENT, SUPPORTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, FOR LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD HELP SUBSIDIZE THE POSTAL BALLOT IN UNION ELECTIONS. (ELECTIONS AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCES OF OTHER TUC AFFILIATES THUS FAR HELD THIS YEAR HAVE RESULTED IN SOME GAINS FOR MODERATES, BUT THESE HAVE BEEN LIMITED.) END SUMMARY.

2. BOYD'S VICTORY IS IMPORTANT BUT BY NO MEANS DECISIVE, SINCE THE MOST IMPORTANT POWER CENTER OF THE UNION RESIDES IN THE PRESIDENCY. HOWEVER, HE WILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY OF THE ENGINEERING UNION WHICH INCLUDES SUPERVISION OF THE STAFF AND WILL

ORGAN OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE RANK AND FILE. BOYD WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE LEADERSHIP TO MODERATE FORCES IN THE UNION. HE IS A CANNY SCOTSMAN, CLOSE TO THE RANK AND FILE, AND HE FOUGHT A SHREWD CAMPAIGN BUT EVEN SOME OF HIS MAJOR SUPPORTERS ARE SENSITIVE ABOUT HIS LIMITATIONS, INCLUDING A TENDENCY TO ALIENATE SOME OF HIS FELLOW MODERATES. HOWEVER, IN TAKING OVER THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S FUNCTION, HE WILL BE GIVING UP HIS FORMER POST AS MEMBER OF THE AUEW EXECUTIVE--WHICH IS TIGHTLY BALANCED BETWEEN THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT--AND THUS LOSE THE RIGHT TO VOTE ON MANY CRITICAL UNION DECISIONS.

3. IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT THE POSTAL BALLOT BECOMES IMPORTANT, SINCE BY ITS ELIMINATION, THE UNION WILL RETURN TO THE OLD SYSTEM OF BRANCH (LOCAL) ELECTIONS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 07707 01 OF 02 211431Z

WHICH WERE FREQUENTLY CHARACTERIZED BY VERY LOW TURNOUTS BY THE RANK AND FILE AND HIGH PARTICIPATION BY COMMUNISTS AND OTHER EXTREME LEFT-WINGERS. POSTAL BALLOTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, TEND TO MITIGATE THE NORMAL APATHY OF THE RANK AND FILE, WHICH HAS OFTEN BEEN MODERATE, SINCE THE POLLING BOOTH IS NO FURTHER AWAY THAN THE NEAREST MAILBOX. UNLESS THE POSTAL BALLOT IS RESTORED--AND AN APPEAL AGAINST ITS ELIMINATION WILL SHORTLY BE HEARD BY

THE UNION'S EXECUTIVE--MODERATE PROSPECTS OF CAPTURING  
OTHER UNION POSTS IN SUBSEQUENT ELECTIONS MAY BE  
UNDERMINED.

4. WHAT SO INFURIATED THE MODERATES IS THAT THE RECENT  
RULES REVISION CONFERENCE OF THE UNION HAD FIRST RE-  
AFFIRMED THE USE OF THE POSTAL BALLOT BY A NARROW VOTE  
OF 27-25, BUT TWO OF THE MODERATES WHO CONTRIBUTED TO  
THIS CLOSE VOTE WERE DISQUALIFIED ON A TECHNICALITY,  
AND THE VOTE BECAME 25-25, THUS THROWING THE ISSUE TO THE  
EXECUTIVE WHICH THEN SPLIT 3-3 AND RESULTED IN SCANLON'S  
CASTING THE TIE-BREAKING VOTE TO DISCONTINUE THE POSTAL  
BALLOT. BOYD DESCRIBED THE DISQUALIFICATION AS "IR-  
REGULAR AND SINISTER" AND SOME MODERATES THREATENED TO

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PAGE 01 LONDON 07707 02 OF 02 211429Z

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/086 W

----- 124769

R 211413Z MAY 75

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 07707

TAKE THE MATTER TO THE HIGH COURT. SINCE THEN, HOWEVER, AS A RESULT OF THE FUROR OVER THE DECISION, THE EXECUTIVE HAS AGREED TO TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE MATTER SHORTLY. SCANLON IS LIKELY AGAIN TO HOLD THE CASTING VOTE ON THE MATTER. AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS A MOVEMENT IN THE PARLIAMENT TO AMEND PENDING LEGISLATION (EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION BILL) TO ALLOW FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCING OF POSTAL

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PAGE 02 LONDON 07707 02 OF 02 211429Z

BALLOTS BY UNION. POSTAL BALLOTS ARE COSTLY, AND AUEW LEFT-WINGERS HAVE ARGUED THAT THE UNION CANNOT AFFORD THEM. GOVERNMENT FUNDING WOULD CERTAINLY ELIMINATE THAT ARGUMENT AND PERHAPS CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE WIDESPREAD USE OF THE DEVICE IN UNION ELECTIONS. IF, AS SEEMS TO BE THE CASE IN THE AUEW, THE MODERATE CAUSE IS ENHANCED BY SUCH USE, ITS EXTENSION TO OTHER UNIONS WILL BE WELCOMED BY MODERATES THROUGHOUT THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. FOR THE MOMENT, THE ISSUE IS IN SUSPENSION.

5. COMMENT. WHILE BOYD'S VICTORY SHOULD NOT BE MINIMIZED -- AND HE HAS PROMISED TO USE HIS NEW OFFICE AGGRESSIVELY -- IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO SUGGEST THAT THE BIG, SPRAWLING ENGINEERING UNION IS MAKING A SHARP TURN TO THE RIGHT. OVERALL, THE UNION IS SAID TO BE SPLIT IN TWO BETWEEN THE RIGHT AND LEFT WINGS, BUT THE AUEW IS REALLY FOUR UNIONS IN ONE--CONSISTING OF A LARGE ENGINEERING SECTION AND THREE MUCH SMALLER GROUPS WITH SEMI-AUTONOMOUS STRUCTURES--REPRESENTING FOUNDRY, DRAFTSMEN, AND TECHNICAL STAFF WORKERS. TWO OF THESE SMALLER SECTIONS ARE IN FACT LED BY COMMUNISTS, ONE OF WHOM IS KEN GILL, WHO WAS RECENTLY ELECTED TO THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL. EFFORTS TO UNIFY THESE SECTIONS TO CREATE A MORE UNIFIED UNION HAVE THUS FAR FAILED. PRESIDING OVER THIS ARRAY IS SCANLON HIMSELF, THE SINGLE MOST POWERFUL LEADER WITHIN THE AUEW. WHEN THE ELECTION TO FIND HIS SUCCESSOR IS HELD--IN 1978--THIS WILL BE THE MOST DECISIVE LEFT-RIGHT BATTLE, AND WE WILL THEN HAVE A TRUE IDEA WHETHER--AT LAST--THE MODERATES IN THE UNION HAVE TRULY RETURNED TO POWER.

RICHARDSON

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION RESULTS, BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, VOTING, LABOR UNIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 21 MAY 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ElyME  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975LONDON07707  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750180-1039  
**From:** LONDON  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750532/aaaabclm.tel  
**Line Count:** 225  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ElyME  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 11 APR 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <11 APR 2003 by lzenbel0>; APPROVED <03 OCT 2003 by ElyME>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** BOYD, LEADING MODERATE, WINS ELECTION FOR ENGINEERING UNION'S SECOND POST  
**TAGS:** ELAB, UK, (BOYD, JOHN)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006